# How Many Calories? Look at the Menu!

hen you eat in a restaurant, do you generally know how many calories you're consuming? The answer is most likely, "no," according to research findings examined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The good news is that FDA is now taking an important step to provide consumers with more information to help them make more informed choices about the food they eat away from home.

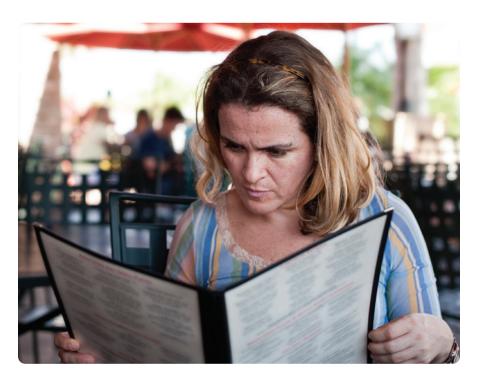
FDA has issued two final rules requiring that calories be listed on certain menus in chain restaurants and other places selling restaurant-type food and on certain vending machines.

"Americans eat and drink about one-third of their calories away from home," says FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D. "These final rules will give consumers more information when they are dining out and help them lead healthier lives."

The goal is to provide consumers with more information in a consistent, easy-to-understand way.

### What's Covered?

The menu labeling rules take effect in one year for restaurants, and apply to restaurants and similar retail food establishments that are part of a chain with 20 or more locations and



that are doing business under the same name; offer basically the same menu items; and sell "restaurant-type" food. More specifically, the menu labeling rules cover:

- Sit-down and fast-food restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops and restaurant-type foods in certain grocery and convenience stores.
- Take-out and delivery foods, such as pizza.
- Foods purchased at drive-through windows.
- Foods that you serve yourself from a salad or hot-food bar.
- Alcoholic drinks such as cocktails when they appear on menus.

 Foods at places of entertainment, such as movie theaters.

The vending machine rules, which take effect in two years, cover vending machines if their operator owns or operates 20 or more of them. Currently, calorie information is not always visible before items are purchased and removed from vending machines. Under the new rule, the calories will be listed on the front of the package or on a sign or sticker near the food or selection button.

#### What's Not Covered?

Examples of food items that are not covered under the rule include:

## "These final rules will give consumers more information when they are dining out and help them lead healthier lives."

- Foods sold at deli counters and typically intended for more than one person.
- Bottles of liquor displayed behind a bar.
- Food in transportation vehicles, such as food trucks, airplanes and trains.
- Food on menus in elementary, middle and high schools that are part of U.S. Department of Agriculture school feeding programs (although vending machines in such locations are covered).

## What Will This Information Look Like?

Calorie information on menus and menu boards will need to be clearly displayed. The calorie count cannot be in smaller type than the name or price of the menu item (whichever is smaller). For salad bars and buffets, the calorie information must be displayed on signs near the foods.

To help consumers put the calorie information in the context of their total daily diet, the rule calls for the following reminder to be included on menus and menu boards: "2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice, but calorie needs vary."

Menus and menu boards will tell consumers that they may ask for additional written nutrition information, which will include total calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, sugars, fiber and protein. The information may come from nutrient databases, cookbooks, laboratory analyses, the Nutrition Facts label, and other sources.

#### A Need for Consistency

Some states, localities and various large restaurant chains are already doing their own forms of menu labeling. The 1990 Nutrition Labeling and Education Act, the law establishing nutrition labeling on most foods, did not cover nutrition labeling for restaurant foods. In the years that followed, states and cities created their own labeling requirements for restaurants. These federal standards will help avoid situations in which a chain restaurant has to meet different requirements in different states.

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